

Repentance Leads To Christ-like Character

“Are you still so dull?”

November 9, 2013

“Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, **Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.**

Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. **When tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.**

Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; **but the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.**

Others, like seed sown on good soil, **hear the word, receive it [lit., welcome it with the desire to obey], and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown”** (Mark 4:15-20).

Have you ever considered that when our Lord Jesus was explaining the various types of “life soil” of people who hear the seed of His word, He was including this unspoken warning: The soil illustrates His line of demarcation between the fruitful in Him who will be welcomed into heaven and the unfruitful who have turned away and end up in the fires of hell? He also makes clear in John 15 the difference in outcome between fruitful branches who abide in Him as the Vine and fruitless ones that are cut off by His Father because they didn’t remain in Him abiding in obedient trust.

You can be certain that spiritual *fruit bearing* which emanates from a grateful heart of love is a critical part of the lives of those who belong to our Lord Jesus, even though many self-proclaimed “Christians” who live for themselves

consider it optional. Bearing fruit to the glory of our Father (John 15:8) is the sign of authentic repentance as emphasized by John the baptizer:

“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **Produce fruit in keeping with repentance...** The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that **does not produce good fruit** will be cut down and thrown into the fire” (Luke 3:7-9).

Life in God’s Kingdom as defined by our Lord in the parables and prophecy in Matthew 25:14-46 is a life of love-compelled, earnest service to our Lord and King. As James makes clear in the second chapter of his letter, your faith is validated by your actions. Authentic trust in Jesus as His new creation can’t help but produce deeds of loving obedience. He has called His own out of the world system to serve others as *His* heart and hands and voice (see 1John 4:17).

If you are following Jesus as the Lord of your life, then your actions done for the glory of our Father and in accordance with His will are going to comprise your living testimony as His vessel. Do you have ongoing testimonies of the ways His Spirit is pouring through you to make Jesus known by your deeds as well as your words? Recount to someone close to you the most recent ways the Spirit has used you in the name of Jesus.

Anything less than you being in your Father’s will and bringing Him glory reveals that you’re either a deceived, satisfied-to-be-mediocre “Christian” or an unbeliever. Unless you repent and receive His forgiveness, the eternal destiny of both categories is the same. Bearing fruit that yields 30, 60, or 100 times can

only be accomplished because the Spirit of our Lord dwells within you; by that grace and power you live according to our Father's will. Many mediocre, carnal-ly-dominated "Christians" *think* the Holy Spirit is within them, but a specific indicator as noted by John the baptizer verifies His presence:

"It's true that I am immersing you in water so that you might turn from sin to God [ie., repent]; but the one coming after me is more powerful than I—I'm not worthy even to carry His sandals—and He will immerse you in the Holy Spirit and in fire" (Matthew 3:11,CJB).

The fire spoken of here has several aspects. •Among them fire tests your own love-based devotion to our Lord as you pursue a life of ongoing *sanctification*. Your old sin-based, toxic motivations are transformed into Christ-like ones (see 1 Peter 1:6,7). •Fire also represents the opposition our Father allows you to face as Satan challenges you (Ephesians 6:16).

Sanctification means being "set apart as holy." We who follow our Lord Jesus are increasingly being made holy as His grace enables us to resist our sin nature (2Corinthians 3:17,18). And, His power heals the sting of our toxic memories so that our minds can be conformed to that of Jesus (1Corinthians 2:12-16).

Self-absorbed mediocre "Christians" avoid the call to be sanctified. Sadly, as they resist God's means of burning away their sin-nature dross, they're unprepared for the purposes He would use them if they had been willing to be set apart from the unholy. And because they're so often enticed and compromised by the world's ways, goals and values, they don't face the kind of satanic opposition the set-apart do. The devil is *already* holding them captive to *do his will* (2Timothy 2:26).

Consider this truth:

If you are *not* experiencing the fires of Christ-like transformation and/or you're not encountering opposition from the devil, you need to examine yourself (2Corinthians 13:5). Does the Spirit of Christ dwell in you? The Spirit and fire go together! To have One is to realize you'll have the other.

You may have heard this old adage: "Where there's smoke, there must be fire!" If you're following Jesus as your Lord, a more poignant saying would be: **"If the Spirit dwells in me, there must also be fire!"**

The fires of testing and trials are a *good* thing for people who love our Lord and want nothing less than to do our Father's will. We recently saw a poster to promote the Marine Corps: "We don't run away from battle, we run toward it!" We who are "soldiers" in our Lord, to use Paul's metaphor to Timothy, don't seek to avoid His fires; rather we go through them because His Spirit is within us, sustaining and encouraging and urging us forward. Those fires mature our trust in our Father and our willingness to stand firm in Jesus and be used by Him no matter what the cost (1Corinthians 15:58).

Do you recall the account of the young Jews Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being thrown into the furnace of fire (Daniel 3)? When King Nebuchadnezzar peered into the flames he asked in astonishment, "*Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?... Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.*" The Spirit of our Lord is always with those who are with Him! His own don't avoid the flames; by His grace they run into them.

It's with this understanding that Peter and James could encourage us today:

•“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face **trials of many kinds**, because you know that the **testing of your faith** develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to **suffer grief in all kinds of trials**. These have come so that **your faith**—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—**may be proved genuine** and may result in **praise, glory and honor** when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1Peter 1:6,7).

“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps” (1Peter 2:21).

Because you’ve picked up your cross to follow your Lord, your fires of suffering are a badge of honor and ownership proclaiming:



Is there any other way you’d rather be known?

“Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door” (Mark 13:29).

In our June 28, 2006 Prophetic Insight, “When The Hebraic Foundations Will Bear Fruit,” we quoted a 1997 prophecy the Spirit had given us:

“These [restoration] truths will not bear

fruit until the ‘Dark Days of Chastisement’ come upon the United States... The children of today will not become grandparents before I chastise the United States... When the chastisement is over, 50 million people will be dead.”

A few years later we were given another prophetic message from the Spirit:

“When a woman becomes President, it will be a sign that all this is about to happen... Continue to share the Hebraic foundations. When these things take place, more hearts will be responsive.”

Our ministry has been threefold:

1. To share the Hebraic foundations.
2. To lead in a manner that keeps institutionalism out and calls for personal responsibility in Christ. Our Lord made clear we were to never let this ministry require a staff to manage; just the two of us prepare and send out the messages.
3. To contend for Jesus in the midst of so many who call themselves “Christian” but serve purposes contrary to His Father’s will.

“Your minds have been made **dull***, for to this day the same veil of toxic memories remains because only in Jesus Christ are they healed” (a rephrasing of 2Corinthians 3:14).

A number of teachers throughout Christendom erroneously declare that followers of Jesus don’t need healing of the pain from their toxic memories. Yet so many pastors and teachers we’ve met or listened to remain plagued themselves by *unresolved bitterness* which flows out of their unhealed memories. This bitterness keeps them in bondage so that they’re

***dull: slow to understand; lacking interest; insensitive; hardened.**

unwilling to forgive from their heart the person(s) who hurt them. And no way are they willing to *bless* those past offenders as Jesus commands them to! (See Matthew 5:44.)

Through their teachings they entice others to join them in their Christ-denying prison of refusing to appropriate His grace to forgive, and to heal their memories. Also, these teachers refuse to recognize the reality of the Father's sovereignty in allowing the painful events that happened to them. Instead, they cling to their bitter memories, focusing only on the people who hurt them.

It's important to recognize that Jesus doesn't change your memory. But He does heal them by changing their chemical makeup and thus removing the painful sting. That healed memory becomes your testimony that gives other people hope of what your Lord Jesus can do for them. You've become a living testimony to the power of Jesus!

In our most recent segment of Repentance Leads to Christ-like Character, "*Only A Few Will Find It!*", we noted the widespread **behavioral addiction** even among Christians to the serotonin and dopamine levels within their brain. We cited that the wholesale use of cell phones and texting is a major contributor to this addiction. Some readers who've experienced healing of the toxicity of past memories have told us they recognized they were truly addicts of their devices. But the Holy Spirit convicted their conscience that they couldn't jeopardize other people by their own actions because Jesus wouldn't do that. Neither would He create apprehension in others by using devices while driving that distracted His attention and put others in harm's way.

[See Lifebyte 73. *Stop Toxic Thoughts—Replace Toxic Memories*; also Chapter 5 of *Demolishing Strongholds, After You've Demolished the Strongholds*, for more on the topic of toxic memories.]

Be assured that the root to *behavioral* addictions, as with substance addictions, are toxic memories that Jesus has not healed! Your sin nature uses your toxic memories to entice you into unChristlike responses, attitudes and actions.

You now have a very real life issue to weigh. What will impel you to diligently pursue the healing of your toxic memories and responses by our Lord so you can stop being an addict and press into His love and purposes for you?

On the following pages (5 thru 7) we discuss in depth the mental dullness that's caused by behavioral addiction to cell phones and texting. YOU need to realize that YOUR addiction to devices which stimulate the release of serotonin and dopamine causes you to be **dull**—dull not only to living in the obedient and loving trust by which you do our Father's will, but also dull to the emotional support others need from you.

In fact your behavioral addiction creates emotional scarring in your children as you ignore and neglect them, setting them aside by your preference for people "out there" in cyberspace. But know that as a result they're developing toxic memories that will **dull them** to the dignity and loving interaction we all need as human beings. If this behavior describes what you're already doing to your children, realize that according to Jesus it would be better for you to have a large millstone hung around your neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea than to cause one of these little ones who trust in Him to sin (Matthew 18:6).

Following Jesus As Your Lord Means Not Only What You Do But Also What You Won't Do

Techno-gadgets such as cell phones, texting pads, and video games are causing so many to treat other people like inanimate objects. Our Lord Jesus wouldn't do this! Each of these devices parasitically feeds on the behavioral addiction of the *emotionally wounded* who don't want to face the fact that they're fearful to relate personally. Christians aren't exempt from this addiction! Many deceive themselves by defending their techno-dependence as a *way to be close*.

Those who are behaviorally addicted to instant connectivity are less and less concerned for the emotional well-being of other people, family and faith family included. Only partially attuned to the people they're actually with, they find they prefer their techno-gadgets which make no demands of them.

Ongoing cell phoning and texting offer you the illusion of close relationship without the need for personal responsibility. Texting is increasingly preferred over calls because texting avoids the awkwardness of having to keep a conversation going or the bothersome time commitment of a phone call. And with texting you can stay in touch with a lot of people but be committed to none.

Many texters grow anxious if they're not continually connected—terrified of going “off the grid.” But dependence on all those digital connections, whether through text access, online games or virtual relationships through Facebook and MySpace means they're *not* participating in the real world of family and friends face to face—the real world where people DO let you down or irritate or frustrate you.

The virtual relationships within Facebook or MySpace or similar sites feed the **stronghold of deceit**. There you're able to create a contrived view of who you want to project yourself as (called an avatar—an alter ego). Under the guise of your “other identity” you reveal nothing of who you really are with all your fears and inadequacies. Your *online, self-created persona* projects only what you want others to perceive about you—if not a full lie, then a half truth.

Under the siren influence of continual techno-connectivity you lose any willingness to look at the darkness in your own soul. You also lose any sensitivity to those around you, especially the ability to see yourself from their perspective. The deceit of your online persona becomes so dominant that you lose the ability to empathize with or have compassion for the people with whom you actually have personal contact. Your perspective of others is biased according to the image you expect of them: flawless like your cyber-friends.

The hypnotic effect of dependence on cyber activity like texting or Facebook registers your focus totally inside yourself. You're concerned with and aware of only how *you* feel rather than expressing either interest or appropriate emotional concern for others, even family members. In person you're behavior toward others is often characterized by the blank look of someone totally preoccupied with internal thought; others around you may as well not exist!

If you're spiritually-minded you may pursue more and more Bible knowledge and other “Christian” materials, but never experience Christ's love. You may readily spout biblical facts, but you're unable to extend His love to others!

So let's look at how Jesus *would* have us live as His flesh-and-spirit representatives. As part of His collective, interconnected called-out body, our Lord Jesus directs that His own actively be part of a **load-bearing faith family** (see Romans 12:4,5). Within the context of this extended spiritual family, each one purposes out of loving obedience to their Lord to live rightly according to His Word so that by His Spirit grateful love is mutually enacted (John 14:21).

Extended family IN Christ are spiritual brothers and sisters who are being disciplined to *reconcile others* to our Father through Jesus and are becoming equipped themselves to *disciple others* (2Corinthians 5:18,19). Growth to maturity in Jesus requires ongoing input and interaction with others who are following Him wholeheartedly, as well as sound biblical instruction by leaders who are willing to confront their sin nature and help them change (1Thessalonians 5:12).

Keep in mind that Christ-like "community" involves people who are there for the good times and the bad in one another's lives. Because of the love which is both extended and experienced, you feel safe enough to reveal what you're going through in the hope and expectation of receiving help and being able to make necessary changes. Authentic community is also the venue for the practical give and take of everyday living and meeting mutual goals and needs.

Christ-like relationships help you make the changes in your attitudes and behaviors that are unlike Him. But if you're addicted to techno-devices and the artificial "friendships" that take away from real loadbearing, Christ-like relationships make you vulnerable, a feeling you don't like.

Online "communities" offer neither the sense of interpersonal responsibility nor confront your sinful choices. Rather they provide a surrogate pretense in which you're "accepted" by others even if your actual face to face relationships don't accept your behavior or attitudes.

The behavioral addiction to techno-devices and to online "communities" fosters **social detachment** among many "Christians." The addiction to the personas of online "friends" is so powerful that other people around them are invisible. It's as if the techno-addict is controlled by the thought, "Why do I have to pay attention to others?" Haven't you encountered people like that in stores or parking lots who walk right into you as if you're not there? They're **emotionless zombies—the walking dead!**

Emotionally wounded "Christian" parents who are captive to their own toxic memories are debilitating their children by role modeling relational unresponsiveness. So many kids have to compete with their parents' devices, whether at meals, in the car, or on vacation. It's especially hurtful when their parent is physically near but glued to their device, ignoring or only partly attentive to the child.

The children learn that the techno-gadget gets the attention and they are minimized, robbed of dignity. The parent's face is devoid of personal expression toward them, or mixed with attention to online tasks.

Yet Jesus loves *each* of us and considered *each* of us so special that He died on the cross to take the punishment our sins so richly deserve. Think of the visual impact of today's video games in which killing and maiming of human beings is the object. People, especially the young,

become *desensitized* to pain. As a result, the simulated violence blurs the line between fantasy and reality so kids inflict pain on other people or on pets without remorse. That's going on in many "Christian" homes as we write!

Many children are growing up with little relational give and take either in their own homes or with playmates. Instead, they engage in fantasies with online pals and/or computerized furry toys. The toys increase their insensitivity because the child can say and do to their computerized pet or doll things they couldn't say or do with a person. Thus the child never learns empathy. Neither does he or she develop concern for understanding another person's point of view or sympathize with their hurt. Their emotions are blunted. They become **emotionless zombies—the walking dead!**

The instant access of cell phones and texting has also shackled mothers to their children of all ages. Many behaviorally addicted, emotionally scarred mothers today are driven by separation anxiety and insist on constant contact with their kids even if they're grown. They panic if the child doesn't get back to them immediately. As a result, behavior that used to be considered childish and irresponsible is now the norm for many young adults—**Mom can't let go!**

Many Christians don't even know how to be alone with the Lord for a period of time. Texting and social networking create anxiety that they'll miss out on something vital if they aren't connected. Solitude is scary because they're always dependent on instant access to others. And you don't get that serotonin/dopamine high when you spend time with Him.

Our Lord assures His own, "*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*" (Matthew 11:29; see also Isaiah 30:15). Perpetual exhaustion characterizes so many "Christians" whose lives are dictated by addiction to their devices. Their addiction to accessibility to others "out there" means they have no time to spend with their Lord. No wonder their harried lives are a poor testimony of their non-existent relationship with Him.

We want to summarize all this for you:

- **Kids** desire a techno buddy rather than a human, and often find it a preferable alternative when a real person isn't fully engaged with them (like a distracted, stressed parent).
- **Teens** have grown to dread face to face communication and prefer texting because then they have no real responsibility for anyone else nor any bothersome time commitment that comes with talking even on a phone.
- **Adults** personally interacting with someone have to consider the other person's needs rather than just their own. So they're tempted to avoid the messy responsibility of a live interactive being and instead relate via simulation through techno-communication.

If you belong to our Lord Jesus you owe it to Him and to others around you that you won't be addicted to the tug of techno-devices. Both He and they deserve your undisturbed, uninterrupted attention. Your focus proclaims to your Lord that He's first and to other people that their dignity matters to you. Stop giving in to sinful addiction through the *tyranny of convenience* which keeps you from your responsibility to interact with others as He would. Technology can't be your master! Only Lord Jesus and what He would or wouldn't do must guide your actions if you're really His!